



NEWSBANK HOT TOPICS

June 2013

CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: Deadly Tornadoes in Oklahoma

TOPIC: A tornado that destroyed the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore and killed many people was only the first of one to do recent damage to the area around Oklahoma City. How many tornadoes have hit the area and what damage has been caused? How are tornadoes measured, and what was the measurement of these recent ones? What relief measures have taken place to help the survivors? What preventative measures are being planned to deal with tornadoes in the U.S.? What kind of tornadoes are predicted for this region in the future and what are these based on? Three storm chasers died during one of the tornadoes. What was their process for tracking and measuring tornadoes and how did the one that killed them catch them off guard?

SEARCH TERMS: Tornado* AND Oklahoma AND (Moore OR "El Reno" OR Oklahoma City)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Controversies at the IRS

TOPIC: President Obama has been facing political scrutiny as he deals with an investigation of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service's targeting of controversial groups for special attention. What information has been discovered as to the process and reasoning given for the targeting of specific political groups for focus? What information has come out about excessive spending at the IRS at a recent conference?

SEARCH TERMS: Obama AND (IRS OR I.R.S. OR Internal Revenue)

SOCIAL ISSUES: Demonstrations in Turkey

TOPIC: What began as a protest against the planned destruction of a green space in Istanbul and its replacement with a shopping mall spread to other cities after the police cracked down on the protesters with tear gas. The numbers of protesters swelled and the crowds began calling for an end to the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. How has Erdogan reacted to these demonstrations? What recent social legislation may be helping to fuel the demonstrations? What foreign policy initiative of Erdogan may also be adding to the causes of them?

SEARCH TERMS: Turkey AND (demonstrations OR protests)

ENVIRONMENT: California Wildfires

TOPIC: Several wildfires are burning in the western United States with the strongest being just north of Los Angeles, forcing many evacuations. What started the fire and what conditions are causing it to grow? What level of damage has the fire caused and what efforts are being made to contain and extinguish it?

SEARCH TERMS: (California OR West) AND wildfire*

ENVIRONMENT: Cicadas

TOPIC: From North Carolina to Connecticut cicadas are due for their once every 17 year reproductive infestation. What determines the pattern of a cicada invasion? What inconveniences can these infestations cause to people living in the affected states? How do these states deal with the infestations?

SEARCH TERMS: cicada* AND (infestation OR invasion)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Hezbollah Joins the Fight

TOPIC: Lebanon's Hezbollah has sent fighters to assist the Assad government in Syria, which has prompted retaliation from rebels. The Shia Hezbollah has joined with the Alawite regime to fight Sunni rebels. What could possibly result from this new development? How is Israel responding to it? What is thought to be Hezbollah larger goal in helping Syria?

SEARCH TERMS: Hezbollah AND Syria

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Counterterrorism Policy

TOPIC: President Obama has given a speech that outlines changes to his counterterrorism policy. What are the changes he wants to make to his existing policies and what are his reasons for the changes? What has been the reaction both for and against these changes?

SEARCH TERMS: Obama AND terrorism AND (policy OR goals OR strategy OR speech)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Chinese Hackers

TOPIC: A U.S. government report has found that hackers in China have gained access to information concerning some major weapons systems in the U.S. What information did they gain access to? What has been the reaction of the U.S. government? What has been the reaction from the Chinese government?

SEARCH TERMS: China AND hack* AND military

CRIME AND LAW: ATM Thefts

TOPIC: On two days, one last December and one in February, near simultaneous withdrawals from ATM machines occurred in 27 cities worldwide. The thieves used debit cards that had no limits on them and moved from ATM to ATM. How much money did they steal? How did the thieves get account numbers and PINs? How were the limits removed from the pre-paid debit cards? How is the investigation going?

SEARCH TERMS: ATMs AND debit cards AND theft

CRIME AND LAW: Truce Brokered

TOPIC: Two major criminal gangs in Honduras have signed a peace treaty, hoping to cut down on the amount of violence and murders in the country. The 18th Street gang and Mara Salvatrucha have reached a truce following months of negotiations brokered by Catholic Bishop Romulo Emiliani. This follows a similar truce between the gangs in El Salvador. Where do these two gangs come from? What are they seeking from the government for reaching this truce? How has the pact worked? How violent is life in Honduras?

SEARCH TERMS: 18th Street AND Mara Salvatrucha AND truce AND (Honduras OR El Salvador)

CRIME AND LAW: Cleveland Hostages Found

TOPIC: Three Cleveland area women who had been missing for a decade, Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight, have been found living a nightmarish existence as hostages and slaves of a disturbed man who lived nearby. How had the man been fooling neighbors and how was it discovered that the missing women were in his home? What earlier clues could have been followed up on better by the police or people in the community?

SEARCH TERMS: Cleveland AND (Amanda Berry OR DeJesus OR Michelle Knight)

CRIME AND LAW: Bloomberg and Obama Threatened

TOPIC: New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and President Obama have both received the toxic substance ricin in threatening letters. What do investigators know about the sources of these letters and what were the motivations of the senders? What other threats have been made against these two men?

SEARCH TERMS: ricin AND letter AND Bloomberg

ECONOMICS: Consumer Confidence

TOPIC: A bull stock market, rising home prices and job growth have given American consumers the highest confidence in the economy in 5 years according to a recent study. What is causing these areas of the economy to improve? What are some economic factors that are still deeply troubling and what is being done to address them?

SEARCH TERMS: consumer confidence

ECONOMICS: Smithfield Foods Purchase

TOPIC: Shuanghui International Holdings Ltd. has agreed in principle to purchase Smithfield Foods Inc., the largest U.S. pork producer. This purchase needs regulatory approval before it can go through and would be the largest purchase by a Chinese company. How does China's weak record on food safety, most recently seen when rat meat was being sold as lamb, play into this deal? Will it impact the cost of food in the U.S. if Smithfield is owned by foreigners?

SEARCH TERMS: Shuanghui International Holdings Ltd. AND Smithfield Foods Inc.

EDUCATION: Changes to Classes in France

TOPIC: France is considering allowing its colleges to teach some classes in English, as part of an educational reform bill. Backers of the bill think it will increase France's competitive advantage in the global market place. Opponents feel it is another encroachment on the French language. Do you feel better English will help French people succeed in a globalizing world? Or are the opponents correct in trying to keep French viable?

SEARCH TERMS: France AND teaching AND English language

EDUCATION: Scripps National Spelling Bee

TOPIC: Arvind Mahankali has won this year's Scripps National Spelling Bee. What word did he have to spell to win? How have the rules of the Scripps National Spelling Bee changed recently?

SEARCH TERMS: Scripps National Spelling Bee

HISTORY: Gettysburg Address

TOPIC: It has been 150 years since President Abraham Lincoln honored the fallen Civil War soldiers with his famous Gettysburg Address. What is the language of the Address and why is it so popular? What are some of the most eloquent lines in it, and what do they mean?

SEARCH TERMS: Gettysburg Address

HISTORY: Common Ancestors

TOPIC: A new study of the DNA of Europeans has shown that most individuals from all parts of the continent have common ancestors from around 1,000 years ago. This in turn means that there was communication between parts of the continent that were previously thought separate. How was this research done and how accurate are the results? How many years ago did an earlier paper predict that all humans share a common ancestor and when would that ancestor have lived?

SEARCH TERMS: Europeans AND DNA and ancestors

HISTORY: Tudor Rose

TOPIC: A new museum has opened in Great Britain that contains the Tudor warship Mary Rose, which sank during the Battle of the Solent. Preserved by the mud, the ship was discovered in 1971 and brought up from the sea floor in 1982. Who organized this retrieval and how difficult was it? How were they able to conserve the wooden hull and other artifacts? What does this ship teach us about ship building during the Tudor era? What do its artifacts tell us about the lives of sailors?

SEARCH TERMS: Mary Rose AND museum

SOCIAL ISSUES: Rioting in Sweden

TOPIC: The death of a man by the police caused rioting in Stockholm and other Swedish cities. The rioters were mostly young people and some attribute their anger to high unemployment or social segregation. How high is unemployment among Sweden's young or immigrant population? Are immigrants an increasing percentage of the population as a whole?

SEARCH TERMS: Sweden AND riots



SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: Turtle Comeback

TOPIC: Atlantic leatherback turtles have made a population comeback in the past two decades, with more females returning to lay eggs on Caribbean beaches. The number of females is also up in Florida and northern Latin America. What are the causes for this population increase? How is the Asian leatherback doing? What are the economic implications of this population increase? Would you like to see the female leatherbacks coming ashore?

SEARCH TERMS: leatherbacks AND population AND Caribbean

HEALTH: Disparity of Hospital Costs

TOPIC: Recently released government figures show that different hospitals, sometimes even within the same city, can charge vastly different amounts for the same treatment. What are some of the factors that account for the differences in cost? What are some ideas that are being considered to bring the costs down for the most expensive hospitals?

SEARCH TERMS: hospital* AND charges

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Aurornis xui

TOPIC: Comparison of a new fossil of a dinosaur bird ancestor, Aurornis xui, has determined that it is a bird and that the Archaeopteryx, which was discovered in Germany in 1861, should be returned to the bird line of descent. A previous fossil had moved Archaeopteryx into the dinosaur branch. What gets compared among all these fossils? Why is it important to know these evolutionary lines of descent? What Chinese scientist is being honored by the name Aurornis xui?

SEARCH TERMS: Aurornis xui AND Archaeopteryx

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Genetically Engineered Wheat

TOPIC: Illegal genetically-engineered wheat has been found in Eastern Oregon and it is causing problems in many critical markets that reject these crops. What determines the legality of genetic engineering? What markets accept and what markets reject genetically engineered crops and why?

SEARCH TERMS: genetically-engineered AND (crops OR wheat OR produce)

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: Champions League

TOPIC: Bayern Munich defeated Borussia Dortmund in the UEFA Champions League Cup game. Why was this victory special for the Bayern squad? Why was it special for Arjen Robben, who kicked in the winning goal?

SEARCH TERMS: Bayern Munich OR Arjen Robben

SPORTS: End of an Era

TOPIC: Sir Alex Ferguson has retired from managing Manchester United. He had held the job since 1986. Where had he coached before coming to Manchester and how successful had he been? How many league titles and how many major trophies did his United teams win? Who were some of the great players he coached? Who is his successor? Is there likely to be another dominant manager like Ferguson going forward?

SEARCH TERMS: Sir Alex Ferguson AND Manchester United

SPORTS: Banning of Anchored Putters

TOPIC: The Royal and Ancient Golf Club and the U.S. Golf Association have banned the anchoring of so-called belly putters starting in 2014. Longer putters can still be used, but they need to be swung freely, as every other golf club is. Some opponents of the ban say it is being imposed only because several majors have been won in recent years by golfers using the anchored putter. Proponents think it gives an unfair advantage to those who use it. Which golfers favor the ban and which oppose it? Why do those two organizations govern the rules of golf? Have any professional tours (PGA Tour, European Tour, etc.) announced where they stand on this subject? Should current tour members who use the club be grandfathered in and not subject to the ban?

SEARCH TERMS: golf AND anchored putters OR belly putters

SPORTS: Top of the World!

TOPIC: Two octogenarians attempted to reach the summit of Mt. Everest in the year of the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of it. As well, a Russian parachutist has used the mountain to make the highest BASE jump ever. Who first reached the top of Everest and how big a deal was it at the time? Did both octogenarians complete their attempts? What is BASE jumping and how impressive is this feat? Why else has Everest been in the news recently?

SEARCH TERMS: Mt. Everest AND ascents OR BASE jumping OR anniversary

SPORTS: LeBron James MVP

TOPIC: LeBron James has been voted the Most Valuable Player in Basketball for 2013. How close did LeBron James come to being the first unanimous choice for MVP? Who voted against him and why?

SEARCH TERMS: LeBron James AND (MVP OR Most Valuable Player)

SPORTS: Ken Venturi

TOPIC: Ken Venturi, winner of the 1964 US Open, and longtime sports announcer passed away not long after being inducted into the Hall of Fame. What were the key strengths of his golf game? What is the chief charitable cause that he worked for?

SEARCH TERMS: Ken Venturi

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS**FILM AND TELEVISION: After Earth**

TOPIC: Movie star Will Smith and director M. Knight Shyamalan have teamed up to make the film *After Earth*. How did they meet, how did they decide to do this film and what are their contributions to it? What is the plot of the film?

SEARCH TERMS: After Earth AND Shyamalan

FILM AND TELEVISION: Cannes Film Festival

TOPIC: The Cannes film festival has concluded. Its jury, led by Steven Spielberg, has awarded a series of prizes. What film won the Palme d'Or? What other films won awards? What actors won for their performances? Who joined Spielberg on the jury?

SEARCH TERMS: Cannes International Film Festival

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Anish Kapoor

TOPIC: Anish Kapoor has a show in Berlin at the Martin-Gropius-Bau. It includes works from the 1980s through today. What type of art does Kapoor make? Do you think you would enjoy seeing it live? What public artworks has he done in the U.S.?

SEARCH TERMS: Anish Kapoor

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Donald Judd

TOPIC: The building in lower Manhattan where minimalist artist Donald Judd lived and worked has been restored and is now open for public tours. What are the qualities that defined his work and why did he disavow the term minimalism as the popular description of his work? What architectural qualities of this building typify the valued architecture of lower Manhattan's Soho neighborhood?

SEARCH TERMS: Donald Judd

LITERATURE: Reverend Andrew Greeley

TOPIC: The Reverend Andrew Greeley was a Roman Catholic priest and a prolific writer of fiction and non-fiction. What kind of fiction did he write and what made these books so popular? What was the focus of his non-fiction works and what positions did he take on the issues he wrote about?

SEARCH TERMS: Reverend Andrew Greeley

LITERATURE: Man Booker International Prize

TOPIC: U.S. author Lydia Davis has won the Man Booker International Prize. She is best known for her short stories. What else does she write or translate? How often is this prize given and when did it start? Who are some of the other winners? Who was on the short list? Who were the judges for it? What other prizes has Davis won?

SEARCH TERMS: Lydia Davis AND Man Booker International Prize

PERFORMING ARTS: ABBA

TOPIC: A museum devoted to the pop group ABBA has opened in Stockholm, Sweden. It has been decades since the four musicians, the initials of whose first names make up the group name, performed. Who are those four musicians and what are they doing since the group broke up? What hits did ABBA have? What stage musical and movie are based on their hits?

SEARCH TERMS: ABBA AND museum

PERFORMING ARTS: American Billboard Awards

TOPIC: Popular singer Taylor Swift has won 8 American Billboard Awards. What music did she win for? Who were some other winners and what are the works they won for?

SEARCH TERMS: American Billboard Awards

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE: Jean Stapleton

TOPIC: Popular actress Jean Stapleton was probably best known for her role as Edith Bunker on the controversial situation comedy All in The Family. How did Jean Stapleton's character add to the themes in this classic TV program? What was Jean Stapleton's most celebrated work in theater?

SEARCH TERMS: Jean Stapleton

PEOPLE: Frank Lautenberg

TOPIC: New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg was the oldest recently serving senator and the last veteran of World War II to serve in the Senate. What is some of the legislation he distinguished himself with? What senate committees did he serve on? What were his positions on the top political issues?

SEARCH TERMS: Frank Lautenberg

PEOPLE: Jack Vance

TOPIC: John Holbrook (Jack) Vance wrote science fiction, fantasy and mystery. Under what pseudonym did he write some of his mystery novels and who were others who'd used the same pseudonym? What were some of his most famous short stories? What other writers did he influence and how?

SEARCH TERMS: Jack Vance

PEOPLE: Ray Harryhausen

TOPIC: Ray Harryhausen was a film writer and producer who created a form of stop-motion animation known as dynamation. What are some of his most famous films and what impressed the critics so much? Who are some of the directors that have been influenced by him and what work most shows this influence?

SEARCH TERMS: Ray Harryhausen

PEOPLE: Dr. Joyce Brothers

TOPIC: Doctor Joyce Brothers was a popular American psychologist who became famous for her daily advice column. What are some other ways that she used the media to make psychology popular and who are some contemporary television personalities that cite her as an inspiration? What game show is she the only woman to have won?

SEARCH TERMS: Joyce Brothers

PEOPLE: Giulio Andreotti

TOPIC: Giulio Andreotti was former prime minister of Italy. The Christian Democrat politician had been near the center of Italian politics since becoming Interior Minister in 1954. What was his political legacy, if any? What was his foreign policy? What was his role in the Clean Hands scandal of the early 1990s? Why was he put on trial in the mid-1990s?

SEARCH TERMS: Giulio Andreotti

PEOPLE: Jorge Rafael Videla

TOPIC: Jorge Rafael Videla was the former military ruler of Argentina who presided over the dirty war against leftists and ruled the country following the 1976 coup against Isabel Peron. What were some of the extrajudicial strategies used by his armed forces? Who were their opponents? What were the disappeared and death flights? Why was he in prison?

SEARCH TERMS: Argentina AND Jorge Rafael Videla OR Dirty War

PEOPLE: Boruch Spiegel

TOPIC: Boruch Spiegel was a fighter in 1943's Warsaw ghetto uprising and then, having survived that, he fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, which was a larger city-wide uprising against the Nazis. His late wife fought in both of these battles, as well. What was the Warsaw ghetto uprising and how did it differ from the Warsaw Uprising? What was the Soviet army's response to the Warsaw Uprising and what could have caused it?

SEARCH TERMS: Boruch Spiegel

PEOPLE: Ray Manzarek

TOPIC: Ray Manzarek was a musician and film director, most famous as a founding member and keyboardist for the rock band The Doors. What was unique about his keyboard playing that added to the Doors signature sound? What were some of the most acclaimed records made by him after The Doors? What are some films that he directed?

SEARCH TERMS: Ray Manzarek